Theatre and Prefabricated Orality: A Corpus-Based Study of English–Spanish Discourse Marker Translation

Teatro y oralidad prefabricada: un estudio basado en corpus sobre la traducción de marcadores discursivos del inglés al español

Théâtre et oralité préfabriquée : une étude basée sur corpus sur la traduction des marqueurs discursifs de l'anglais vers l'espagnol

Teatro e oralidade prefabricada: um estudo baseado em corpus da tradução de marcadores discursivos do inglês para o espanhol

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Abstract

Fictional dialogues, termed *prefabricated orality*, involve the use of features often associated with spoken language, and discourse markers are frequent markers of orality that pose a challenge for translators due to their multifunctionality. These markers play a crucial role in theatre texts, a multifaceted domain in which translational priorities tend to vary depending on whether the text is intended for either performance or reading. However, the translation of discourse markers in theatrical plays remains largely unexplored. This article seeks to delve into this aspect in the English–Spanish language combination, exploring both performance-oriented and reader-oriented translated texts. To this end, we identified translation solutions for frequent English discourse markers (*I mean*, *well,* and *now*) in the TEATRAD parallel corpus. Results show that omissions are common in performance-oriented translations while repetition of specific Spanish discourse markers is more common in reader-oriented translations, pointing to distinct translational patterns within the theatrical and literary systems, respectively. Overall, the use of a diverse range of resources was observed in both systems. This study sheds light on the complexity of translating features of spoken language and offers empirical insights into current trends in theatre translation.

Keywords: prefabricated orality, discourse markers, theatre translation, parallel corpus

Resumen

Los diálogos ficticios, denominados *oralidad prefabricada*, implican el uso de rasgos propios de la lengua hablada, y los marcadores discursivos son marcas de oralidad frecuentes, cuya traducción plantea un desafío debido a su multifuncionalidad. Estas marcas desempeñan un papel crucial en los textos teatrales, un ámbito en el que las prioridades reflejadas en las traducciones tienden a variar dependiendo
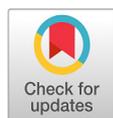
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de si el texto está destinado a la puesta en escena o a la lectura. Pese a su relevancia, la traducción de los marcadores discursivos en obras teatrales apenas se ha estudiado. Este artículo busca profundizar en esta línea mediante la revisión de traducciones inglés-español dirigidas tanto a puesta en escena como a la lectura. Con este fin, se han identificado soluciones de traducción para varios marcadores discursivos comunes en inglés (*I mean, well* y *now*) en el corpus paralelo TEA-TRAD. Los resultados muestran que las omisiones son recurrentes en las traducciones orientadas a la representación teatral, mientras que la repetición de determinados marcadores discursivos en español es más frecuente en las traducciones orientadas a la lectura, lo que apunta a regularidades de traducción diferentes en el teatral y literario, respectivamente. En general, se ha observado el uso de una amplia variedad de recursos en ambos sistemas. Este estudio ilustra la complejidad de traducir rasgos de la lengua hablada y ofrece datos empíricos sobre las tendencias actuales en la traducción teatral.

Palabras clave: oralidad prefabricada, marcadores discursivos, traducción teatral, corpus paralelo

Résumé

Les dialogues fictifs, appelés *oralité préfabriquée*, impliquent l'utilisation de caractéristiques propres à la langue parlée. Au même temps, les marqueurs discursifs sont traces fréquents de l'oralité et représentent un défi pour les traducteurs en raison de leur multifonctionnalité. Ces marqueurs jouent un rôle crucial dans les textes théâtraux, un domaine multifacette où les priorités de la tracuction tendent à varier selon que le texte est destiné à la représentation scénique ou à la lecture. Toutefois, la traduction des marqueurs discursifs dans les pièces de théâtre demeure largement inexplorée. Cet article vise à approfondir cet aspect en examinant des traductions (anglais-espagnol) à la fois orientées vers la représentation scénique et vers la lecture. Pour ce faire, nous avons identifié des solutions de traduction pour des marqueurs discursifs anglais fréquents (*I mean, well* et *now*) dans le corpus parallèle TEATRAD. Les résultats montrent que les omissions sont courantes dans les traductions orientées vers la représentation scénique, tandis que la répétition de certains marqueurs discursifs espagnols est plus fréquente dans les traductions orientées vers la lecture, ce qui met en évidence des schémas de traduction distincts au sein des systèmes théâtral et littéraire, respectivement. L'utilisation d'une ample variété de ressources a été observée dans les deux systèmes. Cette étude met en lumière la complexité de la traduction des caractéristiques de la langue parlée et offre des éclairages empiriques sur les tendances actuelles de la traduction théâtrale.

Mots-clés : oralité préfabriquée, marqueurs discursifs, traduction théâtrale, corpus parallèle

Resumo

Os diálogos fictícios, denominados *oralidade prefabricada*, implicam o uso de características próprias da língua falada. Ao mesmo tempo, os marcadores discursivos são marcas de oralidade comuns, o que representa um desafio para os tradutores devido à sua multifuncionalidade. Essas marcas desempenham um papel crucial nos textos teatrais, um domínio em que as prioridades tradutórias tendem a variar conforme o texto seja destinado à encenação ou à leitura. No entanto, a tradução de marcadores discursivos em peças teatrais permanece amplamente inexplorada. Este artigo busca aprofundar esse aspecto explorando traduções (inglês-espanhol) tanto orientadas para a encenação quanto para a leitura. Para isso, foram identificadas soluções tradutórias para marcadores discursivos comuns em inglês (*I mean, well* e *now*) no corpus paralelo TEATRAD. Os resultados mostram que as omissões são comuns nas traduções orientadas para a encenação, enquanto a repetição de determinados marcadores discursivos em espanhol é mais frequente nas traduções orientadas para a leitura, apontando para padrões tradutórios distintos

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nos sistemas teatral e literário, respectivamente. Observou-se o uso de uma ampla variedade de recursos em ambos os sistemas. Este estudo lança luz sobre a complexidade da tradução de características da língua falada e oferece contribuições empíricas sobre tendências atuais na tradução teatral.

Palavras-chave: oralidade prefabricada, marcadores discursivos, tradução teatral, corpus paralelo

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Introduction

Theatre plays are generally written for live performance, with orality playing a central role. This oral dimension has been highlighted as a defining feature of plays in previous research on theatre translation (e.g. Braga Riera, 2024; Carrero Martín & L. Lapeña, 2020; Cebrián, 2011; Espasa, 2001; Ezpeleta Piorno, 2007; Mateo, 1995; Merino-Álvarez, 1994; Tarantini & Benatti, 2021; Teruel et al., 2009). This mode of discourse, which evokes speech while being pre-scripted, has been termed *prefabricated orality* (Baños, 2009, 2024; Baños & Chaume, 2009; Chaume, 2004a). Such an evocation of orality is realised using *orality markers*, features that are typical of spoken discourse across different linguistic levels: phonetic-prosodic, morphological, syntactic and lexical-semantic (Baños, 2009, 2014, 2024). Translating fictional dialogue involves appropriate awareness and command of the functions of orality markers in the source and target languages to decode and encode these traits in the target text.

As Espasa (2001) notes, audiovisual and theatrical translation involve the task of recreating credible orality. This process has been highlighted as a major difficulty in translation, as stated by Baños & Chaume: "Creating fictional dialogues that sound natural and believable is one of the main challenges of both screenwriting and audiovisual translation" (2009, n. p.). As regards theatre translation, Teruel et al. (2009) emphasise that plays include oral cues for actors and that translations should likewise provide these cues, functioning in a way similar to a musical score. Given that theatrical dialogue is produced and received in real time and allows for no retakes, the translation of plausible orality becomes crucial. Previous research has extensively analysed the translation of orality markers in audiovisual texts (e.g. Baños, 2009, 2024; Baños & Chaume, 2009); however, studies on the translation of orality markers in theatre plays are still scarce.

A peculiarity of theatre translation is that it can be intended either for a theatrical production or for publication, and it has been indicated that these two orientations may lead to different translation strategies (e.g. Aaltonen, 2000). In this article, we use the term *performance-oriented translations* to refer to target texts created for a theatrical production and *reader-oriented translations* to refer to those intended for publication and silent reading. This difference lies on the initial function of translation rather than on specific linguistic traits; nevertheless, empirical research has identified distinct patterns in the translation techniques used in these two types of theatre translation (e.g. Andaluz-Pinedo, 2025; Merino-Álvarez, 1994). Factors related to the theatrical sphere—including the involvement of different agents such as directors or producers, timing and the constraints of live delivery—may contribute to shaping translations. By contrast, translating theatre for the page addresses the readers' imagination. Overall, performance-oriented translations have been found to display greater acceptance of changes to original texts:

> In the theatre, orality, immediacy and communality unavoidably introduce a new dimension to the translation of texts, and, while in literary translation contemporary Anglo-American discourse emphasises the translator's invisibility and the faithfulness of the translation (Venuti, 1995a: 1), theatre translation actively rewrites, or adapts, many aspects of the source text, justifying this strategy with references to the "requirements of the stage. (Aaltonen, 2000, p. 41)

This contribution will focus on the translation of an orality marker that was found to be highly frequent in theatre texts at the syntactic level: discourse markers (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a).[1] Previous research on the translation of discourse markers in theatre plays is scarce, with only a few exceptions (Kruger, 2004; Tarantini & Benatti, 2021). Kruger (2004) examined the translation into Afrikaans of discourse markers from William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in a

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1   Work on other linguistic levels of prefabricated orality includes, for instance, Brumme & Espunya (2012), Hayes (2023) or Zamora & Pavesi (2021).

performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations and found a higher number of markers in the former. Tarantini & Benatti (2021) focus on the translation into Italian of David Mence's *Convincing Ground*, carried out by one of the authors, and suggests the importance of understanding the pragmatic functions of discourse markers. The present study focuses on a different language combination (English–Spanish) and examines discourse markers across different plays and their performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations. This way, the study will bring to light new data in the area of theatre translation.

The data used in this study draw on the TEAT-RAD parallel corpus, a novel resource in the field of corpus-based translation studies that allows for systematic queries and analysis. This corpus contains contemporary English-language theatre classics aligned with their Spanish retranslations: Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. The selection of plays for this corpus was based on a previous catalogue showing their wide presence in the theatrical and literary Spanish systems (Andaluz Pinedo, 2025). To the best of our knowledge, TEATRAD is the only parallel corpus that includes both performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations from the 21st century. This may partly be due to the lack, until recently, of software adapted to structural specificity of theatre texts, as well as to the limited access to performance-oriented translations, many of which remain unpublished. The present study thus offers empirical insights into current trends in theatre translation of influential English-language plays.

The article will begin with a literature review on discourse markers in spontaneous speech as well as fictional dialogues and their translation. The research question, corpus and steps followed in the study will then be described. After that, the results will be presented and discussed. Finally,

the main conclusions and possible lines of future work will be highlighted.

Theoretical Framework

The definition and classification of discourse markers in spontaneous speech will be introduced in this section. Then, the use of discourse markers in prefabricated dialogues will be examined, and previous studies on their translation will be reviewed.

Discourse Markers in Spontaneous Speech

Discourse markers have been described as characteristic features of spoken English (Biber et al., 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 1996; Leech & Svartvik 1994) and Spanish (Briz, 2001; Martín & Portolés, 1999), particularly in conversation. In this paper, the term *discourse markers* will be used following Romero-Fresco (2009a) and Baños (2009). However, as Romero-Fresco (2009a) notes, these features receive different names in the specialised literature, such as "sentence connectives (Haliday & Hasan, 1976), semantic conjuncts (Quirk et al., 1985), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1990) discourse operators (Redeker, 2000) or discourse particles (Zeevat, 2006)" (p. 70). The definitions of these elements in both languages emphasise their cohesive and interactive functions. According to Biber et al. (1999), discourse markers can be defined as:

> inserts which tend to occur at the beginning of a turn or utterance, and to combine two roles: (a) to signal a transition in the evolving progress of the conversation, and (b) to signal an interactive relationship between speaker, hearer, and message. (p. 1086)

Romero-Fresco (2009, pp. 76–98) advanced a categorisation of discourse markers, based on the proposal by Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999), including instances of linguistic resources from each category in English and Spanish, which make this classification a valuable starting point for cross-linguistic contrast between these two languages. The main categories

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Table 1 Discourse Marker Categories and Subcategories

Main Marker Categories	Discourse Marker Subcategories	Uses	Examples	
			English	Spanish
Metadiscourse markers	Hesitation and self-repair markers	They "can be used by speakers who want to go on speaking (Cortés, 1991) but also as stallers (Lam, 2006) or delay devices (Fuller, 2003), when speakers need time to stop and think while hesitating" (Romero-Fresco, 2009a p. 77)	*I mean, well*	*bueno, o sea*
	Unlexicalised filled pauses	They show that "the speaker is having trouble, needs more time, wants to hold the floor or is uncertain" (Romero-Fresco, 2009a, p. 78).	*uh*	*eh*
	Transition markers	"As well as changing the topic, they also enable speakers to indicate the boundaries of the conversation, signalling the beginning of a new phase (Clark, 2001)" (Romero-Fresco 2009a, p. 79)	*now, well*	*bueno, en fin*
	Closing and pre-closing markers	They are used to "signal to the other that the conversation is ending and (...) to add a concluding salutation" (Romero-Fresco 2009a, p. 81).	*okay, see you*	*bueno, pues nada, hasta luego*
Interactive markers	Attention getters	They "draw attention to what is being said, either because the speaker feels that the hearer is not paying enough attention or because s/he feels the need to emphasise a part of the message that is especially relevant" (Romero-Fresco, 2009a, p. 83).	*listen, look*	*mira, vamos a ver*
Discourse markers and modality	Evidential markers	They convey "the speaker's qualification of the truth of what is said" (Recsky, 2004, cited in Romero-Fresco, 2009a, p. 86)	*absolutely, definitely*	*claro, por supuesto*
	Deontic markers	They "indicate whether or not the speaker accepts, or agrees with, what is inferred from the segment of discourse they refer to" (Romero-Fresco, 2009a, pp. 87–88).	*alright, okay*	*bueno, bien*

Source: Romero-Fresco (2009a, pp. 77–88)

and subcategories suggested are summarised in Table 1, including some examples of discourse markers in English and Spanish.

As will be detailed in the Method section, the present study will focus on the translations of hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* and *well*, and the transition markers *now* and *well,* which are highly frequent in English conversation (Biber et al., 1999).

Discourse Markers in Prefabricated Orality and Their Translation

In dramatic dialogue, a two-sided communication system takes place: internal, among characters,

and external, between author and audience (Pfister, 1988). Considering this double system is useful to understand discourse markers in pre-fabricated dialogue. The functions of discourse markers described regarding spontaneous speech would correspond to the internal communication system (among characters), with the fundamental difference that their use is planned. In the external communication system (author-audience), discourse markers connote spontaneous speech, and they could also favour the receivers' comprehension of the transitions and interpersonal dynamics that they reflect. Indeed, the recreation of orality seems crucial for credible dialogues (Arias-Badia, 2020; Baños & Chaume, 2009), a fundamental aspect for quality (Chaume, 2007).

The presence of discourse markers in prefabricated dialogue has been noted in previous studies on different text types, such as theatre (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a; Brumme, 2008, 2012; Brumme & Bernal, 2010; Kruger, 2004), audiovisual (Baños, 2009; Chaume, 2004b; Cuenca, 2008; Cabanillas, 2016; Forchini, 2010, p. 54; Mattsson, 2006, 2009; Romero-Fresco 2009a) and narrative texts (Ramón, 2011). In fact, discourse markers were found to be among the most frequent orality markers in a corpus of theatre plays (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a).

In addition, the difficulty of translating discourse markers has been underlined, due to their multifunctionality (Gutiérrez-Lanza, 2023; Mattsson, 2009; Ramón, 2011), and the fact that the linguistic elements viewed as corresponding in the target language may not have the same pragmatic meaning (Chaume, 2004b). Both the recurrence of discourse markers in prefabricated dialogue and the challenge they present for translation support the relevance of analysing this orality marker. However, there is little research on the translation of discourse markers in theatre plays.

Due to the scarcity of studies specifically focusing on theatre translation, our review was extended to the related areas of dubbing, subtitling and narrative translation. Across the different areas, some trends were identified. On the one hand, previous studies showed the omission of this orality marker as a relatively recurrent solution in theatre translations (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a; Brumme, 2008; Kruger, 2004), dubbing (Cabanillas, 2016; Chaume, 2004b; Cuenca, 2008; Forchini, 2010; Gutiérrez Lanza, 2021; Hernández Bartolomé, 2008), subtitling (Mattsson, 2009; Server Benetó, 2023), and narrative (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2003; Bazzanella & Morra, 2000; Johansson, 2006; Ramón, 2011).

Chaume (2004b) provided clarifying comments on this trend, such as: "audiovisual translations would seem to be less cohesioned texts than their source counterparts. Nevertheless, the audience can repair the possible misunderstandings" (p. 854). This understanding would be produced thanks to their linguistic and textual competence, the information received through the visual channel or the recognition of these aspects as characteristic of audiovisual texts (Chaume, 2004b). This researcher also noted that omissions involved the loss of interpersonal nuances linked to each marker: "losing discourse markers in the process of translating does not seriously affect the target text in terms of semantic meaning—whereas it does in terms of interpersonal meaning" (Chaume 2004b, p. 854).

The addition of discourse markers is also observed, in theatre translations (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a; Kruger, 2004), as well as dubbing (Cabanillas, 2016), possibly as an attempt to make prefabricated dialogues closer to spontaneous speech. In a previous study on a theatre corpus (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a), it was observed that the translations that deleted a higher number of discourse markers were the ones that also added more cases of discourse markers. This might be due to a compensation strategy: "if (...) the translator chooses to do something (add, omit, change etc.) at one point in the text, this action in itself may be sufficient justification for a compensatory strategy at some other point in the text" (Chesterman, 1997, p. 115). As Baños (2013) suggests, a compensation strategy regarding orality markers would aim at achieving a similar effect of credible dialogues in the target text.

Chaume (2004b) and Romero-Fresco (2009a, 2009b) analysed the linguistic resources used to translate discourse markers in audiovisual dialogues, and concluded that some of these resources were unnatural in the target language. The concept of naturalness is understood here as "nativelike selection of expression in a given context" (Romero-Fresco, 2009a, p. 200). In this regard, Romero-Fresco (2009a, 2009b) noted that the lack of naturalness is materialised in an excessive use of certain markers (e.g. *bueno* as a hesitation and self-repair marker); the absence of resources that

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were frequent in the consulted corpora of spontaneous interactions or original versions (such as the hesitation and self-repair marker *o sea*) as well as the absence of variety and combinations of units, which were also common in these corpora; the use of resources with a function that differs from the one that they have in the target language (e.g. *está bien* as a transition marker); and the use of resources that are typical of formal interactions which add distance, among characters and with the audience, and are not coherent with other colloquial expressions (such as the transition marker *bien*).

Interestingly, Romero-Fresco (2009a) posited that the lack of naturalness of some solutions might be due to a "suspension of linguistic disbelief" (p. 202), according to which the audience, and perhaps translators, tended to ignore unnatural translations which are frequent in dubbing.

Another trend identified in the translation of discourse markers—noted in subtitling (Mattsson, 2009), narrative (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2003; González-Villar, 2015; Ramón, 2011) and dubbing (Cuenca, 2008)—was the use of a wide range of linguistic resources and the repetition of certain preferred solutions.

For instance, Mattsson (2009) indicates that the options found to translate the discourse markers *well*, *you know*, *I mean*, and *like* in her corpus of subtitles into Swedish include other discourse markers, conjunctions, punctuation marks and adverbs. This researcher observed varied solutions and differentiated two groups of resources: some which were used by default, probably due to their similarity to the markers in the original text, and others that did not seem to correspond directly to them, but which reflected their pragmatic functions (Mattsson, 2009). She suggested that discourse marker functions in subtitling could be made explicit with the aim of making them clearer for the audience—"the subtitlers are trying to make the functions of the DPs [discourse particles] in the STs [source texts] as clear as possible for the viewer" (Mattsson, 2009, p. 266).

In the same line, González-Villar (2015) observed the use of different linguistic resources to translate the function of discourse markers from German into Spanish and Catalan. This diversity is explained by Cuenca (2008) as related to the different pragmatic nuances that markers perform in the discourse where they are inserted: "markers like *but* or *after all*, which are more linked to the propositional level, receive a more consistent translation than markers like *well*, which are more linked to pragmatic levels of discourse construction" (p. 1387).

The present study will pay attention to whether solutions, such as omission, prevalence of specific resources or variety of resources are reproduced in our corpus of theatre plays. This work will thus contribute towards filling the gap regarding the scarcity of studies on English–Spanish translation of discourse markers in plays for both performance- and reader-oriented target texts.

Method

This study examines discourse markers in English-language plays and their performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations into Spanish. Particularly, it intends to answer the following research question: What are the most frequent solutions for the translation of recurring English discourse markers (hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* and *well* and transition markers *now* and *well*)? This section breaks down the selection of discourse markers and parallel corpus examined, as well as the procedure followed in the analysis.

Discourse Marker Choice

The discourse markers studied (hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* and *well* and transition markers *now* and *well*[2]) were selected due to their frequency in English conversation (Biber et al., 1999), and also

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2 Since *well* is multifunctional, it was analysed both with the function of a hesitation and self-repair marker and a transition marker.

in the plays studied. It should be mentioned that *well* appeared both on its own and in the combination *ah well* in our corpus; these two cases were studied separately. Examples of the English discourse markers from the TEATRAD corpus are offered below to clarify their functions.

In the examples of hesitation and self-repair markers, *I mean* is used by a character to correct himself and be more specific, changing the verb *do* to *study*, and *well* points to the fact that another character is thinking at the time of speaking and that delays his choice of words. The instances of transition markers show their signposting of new phases of discourse: *now* shifts the attention from an interlocutor to another, *well* from the topic of a character's behaviour to having finished dinner, and *ah well* from an order to a comment.

Examples:

- Hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean*: AMANDA: [beaming] Splendid! What does he do, I mean study? (Williams, 2011)

- Hesitation and self-repair marker *well*: JIM: (…) You know-you're-well very different! (Williams, 2011)

- Transition marker *now*: HALE: (…) Mr. Putnam, stand close in case she flies. Now, Betty, dear, will you sit up? (Miller, 2003)

- Transition marker *well*: AMANDA: (…) But that's no excuse for Tom. Well, we got through dinner. (Williams, 2011)

- Transition marker *ah well*: WINNIE: (…) Spit it out, dear, spit it out! [Pause. Back front.] Ah well, I suppose it's only natural. (Beckett, 1961)

The Corpus

The English–Spanish parallel corpus of theatre texts, TEATRAD (TEAtro TRADucido / translated theatre) was used in this analysis. This corpus was built using the tool TAligner[3] and is innovative, given the lack of parallel corpora containing theatre translations (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022b, 2025). The part of the TEATRAD corpus studied consists of three original plays in English, as well as three performance-oriented Spanish translations and three reader-oriented translations, all of which share the same English source plays. In total, the corpus examined contains 198,763 words: 70,746 words of original plays in English, 50,843 of the TEATRADp subcorpus and 77,174 of the TEATRADr subcorpus. The original plays included in the TEATRAD corpus were selected on the basis of their wide circulation in Spanish theatrical and literary culture, as documented in a previous catalogue (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022b, 2025). The translations are all in European Spanish and have been performed or published for reading in the 21st century. This selection seeks to provide a current account of theatre translation trends for both stage performance and publication.

More specifically, the corpus studied includes the original plays *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (2003), *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams (2011) and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett (1961), aligned with their performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations by Alberto González Vergel and Julián Escribano Moreno (Miller, 2007), Ramón Espejo (Miller, 2011), Eduardo Galán (Williams, 2014), Amado Diéguez (Williams, 2007), Juan Vicente Martínez Luciano (Beckett, 2011) and Antonia Rodríguez Gago (Beckett, 2020), respectively.

The subcorpus made up of performance-oriented translations will be referred to as TEATRADp, and that of reader-oriented translations as TEATRADr. The translators of the performance-oriented

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3 TAligner is a tool to build and query parallel corpora developed in the TRALIMA research group, based on the software TRACE Corpus Tagger/Aligner 1.0, created in the TRACE group (Sanz-Villar & Andaluz Pinedo, 2021; Zubillaga et al., 2015). The tool is freely available at http://hdl.handle.net/10810/42445

target texts display a wider diversity of professional profiles than those of the reader-oriented translations, in line with general trends identified in a previous catalogue of these two types of translations (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022b, 2025).

In the case of *Happy Days*, the performance-oriented translation was produced by Juan V. Martínez Luciano, a translator and academic. The performance-oriented target text of *The Crucible* examined resulted from a collaboration between Alberto González Vergel, who also directed the theatre production, and Julián Escribano Moreno, a scriptwriter. The performance-oriented target text of *The Glass Menagerie* was carried out by the producer, Eduardo Galán. The reader-oriented translation of *Happy Days* was provided by Antonia Rodríguez Gago, an emeritus professor specializing in Beckett. The reader-oriented translation of *The Crucible* was created by Ramón Espejo, an academic with extensive research on Miller who has translated several plays by this author. Finally, the reader-oriented translation of *The Glass Menagerie* was carried out by translator Amado Diéguez.

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Procedure for Analysis

The English discourse markers selected (hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* and *well* and transition markers *now* and *well*) were searched using the concordance search tool in TAligner. This way, concordances were obtained showing the source text utterances aligned with their corresponding segments in both the performance-oriented and reader-oriented target texts (Figure 1).

Thus, TAligner enables a systematic identification of occurrences of the selected words in the original plays, as well as their translation solutions in the TEATRADp and TEATRADr subcorpora. As can be observed in Figure 1, the word *well* is used with different functions in the concordances. Given the multifunctionality of these items, it was necessary to filter the relevant cases in which they function as hesitation and self-repair markers (*I mean* and *well*) and as transition markers (*now* and *well*). The concordances retrieved using TAligner were extracted to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to facilitate analysis. After filtering and classifying the discourse marker instances, their

Figure 1 Discourse Marker Concordances

Table 2 Analysis of Discourse Markers in the Corpus

Discourse Marker	Original Play	Type of Discourse Marker	Performance-Oriented Translation	Translation Solution	Reader-Oriented Translation	Translation Solution
now	HALE: Then you saw him! [Tituba weeps.] **Now** Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Hell it is very hard to break with it. We are going to help you tear yourself free-	Transition marker	HALE: [Terminante TITUBA llora.] ¡Entonces, lo viste!... ¡Tituba, sé que cuando uno se ata al infierno es muy difícil evadirse! ¡Pero vamos a liberarte!	Ø (marker omitted)	HALE: ¡Entonces sí lo has visto! [TITUBA solloza.] **Vamos a ver**, Tituba, yo sé que una vez que nos entregamos a Satán es muy difícil romper con él. Pero estamos aquí para ayudarte a hacerlo y...	Vamos a ver
now	ABIGAIL: Betty? [She goes to Betty.] **Now**, Betty, dear, wake up now. It's Abigail. [She sits Betty up and furiously shakes her.] I'll beat you, Betty! [Betty whimpers.] My, you seem improving. I talked to your papa and I told him everything. So there's nothing to-	Transition marker	ABIGAIL: [ABIGAIL se vuelve hacia la cama. La zarandea con furia. BETTY gime.] ¡Betty!... ¡**Vamos**, Betty, despierta, soy Abigail!...	Vamos	ABIGAIL: ¿Betty? [Se dirige hacia ella.] Despiértate ahora, cariño, **anda**. Soy Abigail. [Hace que se incorpore en la cama y la sacude con furia.] Si no, te voy a dar un guantazo, Betty. [BETTY gimotea.] Ah, parece que mejoras. He hablado con tu papá y se lo he contado todo, así que no hay...	anda
now	PARRIS: **Now**, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I am certain there be no element of witchcraft here.	Transition marker	PARRIS: [Sin comprometerse.] Creyeron que lo era. Además, estoy seguro de que aquí no hay nada de brujería.	Ø (fragment omitted)	PARRIS: Señora, **por favor**, sólo pensaban que podía ser una bruja. Pero en este caso no hay nada que haga pensar en brujería.	por favor

corresponding translation solutions were identified and quantified. These included omission (either of the marker alone or of a longer fragment) and the use of different linguistic resources to transfer the marker, which may highlight specific interpretations. Table 2 shows a fragment of the spreadsheet, including columns for the searched words, filtered concordances from the source texts, discourse marker classification, and the aligned segments from the performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations, together with their corresponding translation solutions.

Finally, a ratio was obtained indicating how many occurrences of the English discourse marker were found for each different translation solution, in order to complete the overview of the variety of translation options.

Results

The search of the English discourse markers (hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* and *well* and transition markers *now* and *well*) in the original plays yielded 83 occurrences. Since two translations were aligned to each source text in the parallel corpus, 166 translation solutions were analysed in TEATRADp and TEATRADr. This section will highlight the most frequent translation solutions for each discourse marker in TEATRADp and

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TEATRADr and provide the ratio of the variety of options to translate the markers. The quantitative overview of the translation solutions in the subcorpora will be presented through graphs, and examples illustrating the main trends will be provided.
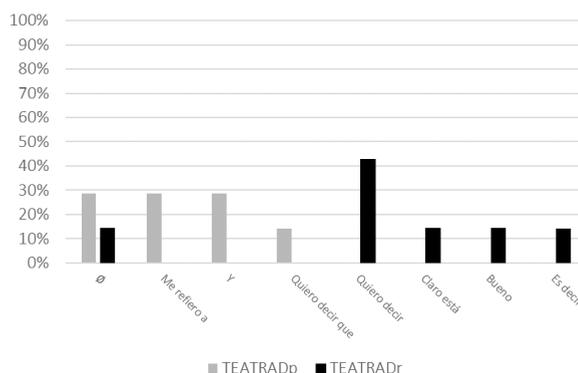
Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker *I Mean*

The source texts of the corpus yielded seven occurrences of the hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean*. In TEATRADp, no translation solutions represented over 30% of the cases where this marker appeared in the source texts. The most frequent solutions were omission, the rephrasing *me refiero a* [I refer to] and the coordinating conjunction *y* [and] (28.6% each).

Meanwhile, in TEATRADr, the literal option *quiero decir* [I mean] stood out quantitatively (42.9%). Most of the resources used were different in each subcorpus of translations. The low number of occurrences of this marker in the source texts might not have favoured more coincidences of resources between the subcorpora. Overall, the translations of the hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean* appear to reflect an intention on the part of translators to convey their context-specific functions.

Both TEATRADp and TEATRADr showed a high variety of translation solutions, although in TEATRADr this diversity was slightly higher (there was a different solution in TEATRADp and TEATRADr

Figure 2 Translation Solutions for Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker *I Mean*

for every 1.8 and 1.4 occurrences of the English hesitation and self-repair marker, respectively). Figure 2 displays the translation solutions for hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean* in TEATRADp (grey) and TEATRADr (black).

Table 3 shows an occurrence of the hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean* in a source text from the TEATRAD corpus (*Happy Days*), through which a character self-corrects to add a specification of the previous part of her discourse, mirroring the immediate nature of spoken discourse which lends itself to repairs in communication. The solutions used to translate the hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean* here are among the most frequently observed in each subcorpus: *y* [and] in TEATRADp, which focused on the addition of information rather than the reformulation, and *quiero decir* [I mean] in TEATRADr, which

Table 3 Example of Translations of the Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker *I Mean*

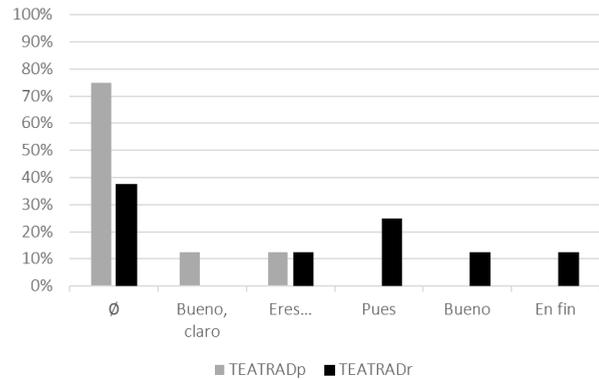| Source Text	TEATRADp	TEATRADr
WINNIE: (…) With the sun blazing so much fiercer down, and hourly fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire never known to do so, in this way <u>I mean</u>, spontaneous like.	WINNIE: (…) Con el sol quemando ahora mucho más, cada vez más, ¿no resulta normal que ardan cosas que jamás antes habían ardido? <u>Y</u> así, de manera espontánea. [Back translation: With the sun blazing now so much more, more and more, is it not normal that things go on fire which had never before gone on fire? <u>And</u> like this, in a spontaneous way.]	WINNIE: (…) Con el sol abrasando cada vez con más fuerza, hora tras hora, no es natural que ardan las cosas aunque nunca lo hayan hecho, <u>quiero decir</u>, al menos de este modo, espontáneamente. [Back translation: With the sun blazing so much stronger, hour after hour, is it not natural that things go on fire although they had never done so, <u>I mean</u>, at least in this way, spontaneously.]

shows a close translation to the source text, a priority expressed by the translator herself (Rodríguez Gago, 2020).

Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker *Well*

The number of occurrences of hesitation and self-repair marker *well* found was 8. Omission was the most frequent solution regarding this hesitation and self-repair marker in both TEATRADp (75%) and TEATRADr (37.5%). Although the hesitation nuances of the hesitation and self-repair marker *well* were not transferred, a qualitative examination of the concordances suggests that hesitation was already conveyed by other elements in some segments, which may have influenced translators' choices. TEATRADp showed less variety of solutions than TEATRADr (with ratios of 2.7 and 2, respectively). Figure 3 displays the prominence of these solutions in the subcorpora, together with other sporadic options. As in the case of the hesitation and self-repair marker *I mean*, solutions were generally different in each subcorpus.

Table 4 presents an occurrence of hesitation and self-repair marker *well,* which imitates a discourse where the character requires time to think and uses the marker to continue with his turn in the play *The Glass Menagerie*. The example illustrates the main trends observed in both TEATRADp and TEATRADr, namely omission of the hesitation and self-repair marker. In the case of the performance-oriented target text, the sense of hesitation may have been conveyed through non-verbal means. In the reader-oriented translation, it might not have been deemed necessary given the presence of

Figure 3 Translation Solutions for Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker *Well*

the suspension points which also convey a sense of hesitation.

Transition Marker *Now*

Regarding the transition marker *now*, 19 occurrences were found in the source texts. The most frequent solution to translate this marker in TEATRADp was, again, omission (84.1%). Two types of omissions can be noted in the TEATRADp subcorpus: omissions only of the discourse marker and omissions of a longer fragment containing the discourse marker, in some cases including several utterances. These frequent omissions seem to be in line with the modifications introduced by some translators for the stage, as observed in previous studies (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2025; Merino-Álvarez, 1994).

On one hand, performance-oriented translations may prioritise specific ideas for a given production, which can involve textual modifications.

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**Table 4** Example of Translations of the Hesitation and Self-Repair Marker Well

Source Text	TEATRADp	TEATRADr
JIM: (…) They're common as-weeds, but-you-<u>well</u>, you're-Blue Roses!	JIM: (…) Los demás andan por la tierra y tú eres de verdad, estás aquí frente a mí. Tú eres "Blue Roses". [Back translation: The rest walk around the earth and you are real, you are here in front of me. You are "Blue Roses".]	JIM: (…) Ellos son comunes y corrientes como... la hierba, como la maleza, pero tú... tú eres ¡Blue Roses! [Back translation: They're common as… grass, as weeds, but you… you're Blue Roses!]

As for TEATRADr, the most salient solution for the translation of the transition marker *now* was the attention getter *Vamos a ver* (31.6%), which literally means *let's see*, but could be perceived as functionally like *now*. This resource has been pointed out as a common marker in Spanish conversation (Romero-Fresco 2009a).

On the other hand, reader-oriented translations typically aim to represent the source text faithfully, according to previous research (Merino-Álvarez 1994; Andaluz-Pinedo, 2025). Interestingly, in the TEATRADr subcorpus, this tendency involves preserving the oral dimension of plays. Apart from these recurrent translation solutions, a range of different resources was also found in each subcorpus. TEATRADp showed a much lower diversity of solutions than TEATRADr (a resource per 4.6 occurrences of the transition marker *now*, in contrast to the ratio of 1.9 in TEATRADr). This seems due to the high incidence of omission in the former subcorpus. Figure 4 includes the translation solutions observed in each subcorpus in order of frequency.

This result agrees with the study by Mattsson (2009) on subtitling regarding the default use of certain linguistic resources, possibly due to their similarity with the discourse markers of the source texts, as well as the use of a wider variety of options that do not seem to correspond directly to them but which seem to reflect their specific pragmatic functions in the context in which they appear.

Figure 4 Translation Solutions for Transition Marker Now
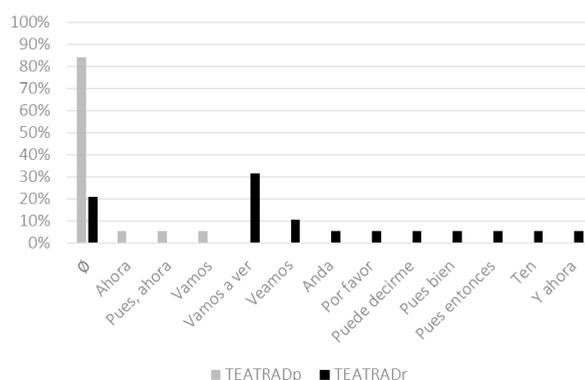
In Table 5, the transition marker *now* shows a shift between topics within the utterance of a character in *The Crucible*. The most frequent solutions to address this transition marker in the corpus can be observed: an omission in TEATRADp and its translation for *vamos a ver* [now] in TEATRADr. Different decisions can thus be observed regarding whether to reflect the explicit connection present in the source text between the two parts of the utterance.

Transition Marker *Well*

The transition marker *well* was registered in 35 cases in the source texts. The most frequent solution in TEATRADp was, once more, omission. In TEATRADr, the most salient solution was *bueno* [well]. This resource has been noted as a frequent transition marker in Spanish conversation

Table 5 Example of Translations of the Transition Marker Now

| Source Text	TEATRADp	TEATRADr
HALE: Then you saw him! [TITUBA weeps.] Now Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Hell it is very hard to break with it. We are going to help you tear yourself free-	HALE: [Terminante. TITUBA llora.] ¡Entonces, lo viste!... ¡Tituba, sé que cuando uno se ata al infierno es muy difícil evadirse! ¡Pero vamos a liberarte! [Back translation: HALE: [Categorical. TITUBA weeps.] Then, you saw him!... Tituba, I know that when you bind yourself to hell it is very hard to avoid it! But we are going to free you!]	HALE: ¡Entonces sí lo has visto! [TITUBA solloza.] Vamos a ver, Tituba, yo sé que una vez que nos entregamos a Satán es muy difícil romper con él. Pero estamos aquí para ayudarte a hacerlo y... [Back translation: HALE: Then you have seen him! [TITUBA weeps.] Now, Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Satan it is very hard to break with him. But we are here to help you to do it and...]

(Romero-Fresco 2009a; Briz 2001; Briz et al. 2008).

According to the definition provided by Briz et al. (2008), *bueno* "presents the part of discourse which appears as a continuation of what was previously said" (my translation), a function which was reflected in the studied concordances. The distinct trends observed between the performance-oriented and reader-oriented translations examined here may be explained by differences in accepted translational behaviour in the theatrical and literary systems.

In the former, the translation of plays encompasses a wide range of approaches, from close renderings of the original to adaptations or rewritings conceived for a specific production, whereas the literary system tends to favour fidelity to the source text (Aaltonen, 2000). A few other linguistic resources were used in the translations of the subcorpora.

The choice of Spanish markers which are frequent in conversation and their use with the corresponding functions, as well as the use of a variety of markers could suggest that audiences would receive the credibility of this orality marker similarly in original and translated theatre, as was also observed in subtitling (Mattsson, 2009). Following the tendency noted thus far, TEATRADp included a lower variety of solutions

Figure 5 Translation Solutions for Transition Marker *Well*
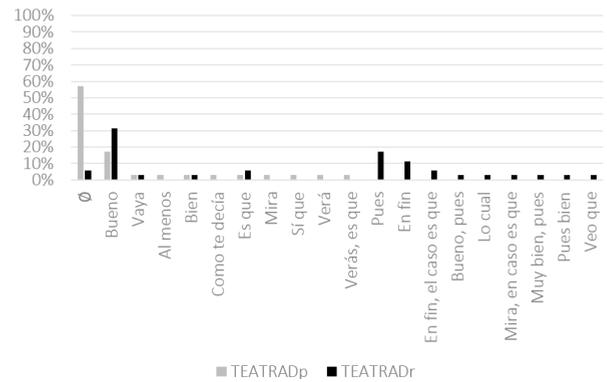
■ TEATRADp ■ TEATRADr

than TEATRADr (with ratios of 3.2 and 2.3, respectively). Figure 5 shows the preferred solutions in each subcorpus, along with the other less recurrent resources.

In Table 6, the transition marker *well* introduces an utterance linking it to the previous one with some sense of contrast in *The Glass Menagerie*. The most frequent solutions found to address this transition marker are illustrated in this example: it is omitted in TEATRADp and translated for *bueno* in TEATRADr.

Transition Marker *Ah Well*

Additionally, 14 occurrences of *well* appeared preceded by the interjection *ah*. The translation behaviour observed with regard to the

Table 6 Example of Translations of the Transition Marker *Well*

| Source Text	TEATRADp	TEATRADr
JIM: Poor little fellow, he must feel sort of lonesome. LAURA: [smiling] <u>Well</u>, if he does, he doesn't complain about it. He stays on a shelf with some horses that don't have horns and all of them seem to get along nicely together.	JIM: ¡Qué solo debe sentirse! LAURA: No se queja. Vive con algunos caballos y parece que se llevan bastante bien. [Back translation: JIM: How lonely he must feel! LAURA: He doesn't complain. He lives with some horses and they seem to get along quite well.]	JIM: Pobrecito, debe de sentirse muy solo. LAURA: [sonriendo] <u>Bueno</u>, si es así, no se queja. Vive en un estante con algunos caballos que no tienen cuerno y parece que se llevan bastante bien. [Back translation: JIM: Poor little fellow, he must feel very lonesome. LAURA: [smiling] <u>Well</u>, if he does, he doesn't complain. He lives on a shelf with some horses that don't have a horn and they seem to get along quite well.]

combination *ah well* was different to the trends noted so far, as there seemed to be an intention to retain this marker in both subcorpora and not to vary the linguistic resources in Spanish, especially in TEATRADr.

The most frequent solution in both TEATRADp and TEATRADr was *en fin* [well], which has been noted as a common marker in Spanish (Romero-Fresco 2009a). According to Briz et al. (2008), *en fin* "presents the part of discourse where it appears as a conclusion, at the same time as a closing and final summary (often appraising) which is derived from all or part of what was previously said" (my translation).

In this case, a few other resources were used in TEATRADp, particularly the transition marker *bueno* [well], while no different options were observed in TEATRADr. TEATRADp showed little diversity of resources (ratio of 2.8), but TEATRADr included no variety of solutions at all (ratio of 14). Apart from this exception, the ratio of all the other markers showed a wider variety of translation solutions in TEATRADr than in TEATRADp.

From a qualitative perspective, it was observed that all the occurrences of *ah well* in English were associated to the same character (Winnie, in the play *Happy Days*), which might have led to the decision of repeating the same target resource in the translations for characterising purposes. In fact, the translator of the reader-oriented target text of this play emphasised the importance of structural form in the original text (Rodríguez

Figure 6 Translation Solutions for Transition Marker *Ah Well*
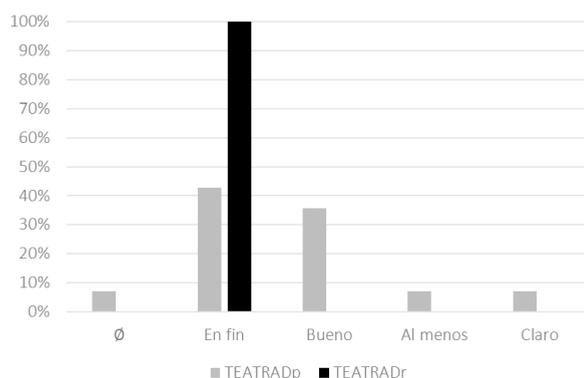
Gago, 2020). This might explain the differences with the translation of the other markers—why there were less omissions in TEATRADp and why TEATRADr repeated the same marker. This case could illustrate Pfister's (1988) suggestion of a tension between aesthetic aspects and the imitation of orality in theatre plays. Figure 6 displays the translation solutions registered in TEATRADp and TEATRADr.

Table 7 shows a concordance of the transition marker *ah well*, associated to the character that contains all the occurrences of this marker in the corpus (Winnie, in *Happy Days*). It introduces a new segment of discourse that focuses on a different aspect from the previous one. The example includes the translation of *ah well* using the Spanish transition marker *bueno* [well] in TEATRADp and *en fin* [well] in TEATRADr. Both resources are common in spontaneous conversation in the target language. The main difference between the

Table 7 Example of Translations of the Transition Marker *Ah Well*

Source text	TEATRADp	TEATRADr
WINNIE: (…) [Eyes front. Pause.] <u>Ah well</u>, what matter, that's what I always say, it will have been a happy day, after all, another happy day.	WINNIE: (…) [Los ojos al frente. Pausa.] <u>Bueno</u>, qué más da, es lo que siempre digo, después de todo habrá sido un día feliz, otro día feliz. [Back translation: WINNIE: (…) [Eyes front. Pause.] <u>Ah well</u>, what matter, that's what I always say, after all it will have been a happy day, another happy day.]	WINNIE: (…) [Ojos al frente. Pausa.] <u>En fin</u>, qué importa, eso es lo que siempre digo, habrá sido un día feliz, después de todo, otro día feliz. [Back translation: WINNIE: (…) [Eyes front. Pause.] <u>Ah well</u>, what matter, that's what I always say, it will have been a happy day, after all, another happy day.]

performance- and reader-oriented translations seems to be the decision to vary the translation solutions to a certain extent or to keep the same target resource for the translation of all the instances of the English transition marker.

Conclusions

Different reasons underline the relevance of further research on discourse markers in theatre translations. Firstly, orality markers, and discourse markers in particular, play an important role in the external communication system of plays, between the author and the audience. They recreate spontaneous orality thus promoting credibility, an aspect which has been linked to quality (Chaume, 2007). The translation of discourse markers poses challenges, mainly due to their multifunctionality (e.g. Mattsson, 2009). In relation to this difficulty, previous work on audiovisual translation shows a variety of translation solutions and the unnaturalness of some options (e.g. Chaume, 2004b; Romero-Fresco, 2009a). The translation of discourse markers in theatre plays seems to have received little attention; however, it has been observed that discourse markers were amongst the most frequent orality markers in a corpus of theatre plays (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2022a).

This paper contributes to filling that gap through an analysis of English–Spanish translation solutions for highly frequent discourse markers. To this end, the TEATRAD parallel corpus was analysed including performance-oriented and reader-oriented target texts from different plays translated during the 21ˢᵗ century. The study identified the most recurrent solutions for the translation of the hesitation and self-repair markers *I mean* (omission, *me refiero a* and *y* in TEATRADp and *quiero decir* in TEATRADr) and *well* (omission in TEATRADp and TEATRADr) and the transition markers *now* (omission in TEATRADp and *vamos a ver* in TEATRADr), *well* (omission in TEATRADp and *bueno* in TEATRADr) and *ah well* (*en fin* in TEATRADp and TEATRADr).

Overall, it was observed that omission was highly frequent in the TEATRADp subcorpus. The general trend for acceptability of some performance-oriented target texts seems to affect the way in which the translation of specific microtextual features is addressed, in this case through the omission of a high number of discourse markers. In the theatrical system, it is accepted that a translator changes the text to adjust it to a particular production (Aaltonen, 2000), which may involve the deletion of segments from the original text. In contrast, closeness to the original is required in the literary system (Aaltonen, 2000). This could explain the lower number of omissions of discourse markers in reader-oriented target texts. Thus, as observed in a previous study (Andaluz-Pinedo, 2025), the theatrical and literary systems show specific norms which affect translations differently. The present study provides further evidence for this trend at the microtextual level regarding discourse markers.

Apart from the mentioned preferred solutions in each subcorpus, a variety of other context-based linguistic resources was registered. This matches the results by Mattsson (2009) for subtitling and suggests a possible trend across the translation of prefabricated orality in different text types. The wide range of translation solutions observed in the subcorpora seems to favour the credibility of prefabricated orality in the theatre translations. An exception to this general trend was observed in cases where a specific English discourse marker was repeated in the speech of a character (Winnie in *Happy Days*), and the translations similarly favoured the same marker in the target language. This seems to be due to decisions regarding the speech of certain characters and would illustrate the tension between the evocation of prototypical features of orality and usual mechanisms of writing such as characterisation.

According to the data obtained, the reader-oriented target texts under examination exhibit natural-sounding discourse marker usage. These

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results suggest that the fact that a theatre translation is intended for reading, rather than performance, does not necessarily mean that its oral aspect is overlooked. Overall, the linguistic data provided helps deepen the understanding of an inherent trait of theatre plays, prefabricated orality, and its translation.

The present study is limited to the parallel corpus of theatre translations built. Future work could involve enlarged corpora, although the scarce publication of performance-oriented translations and the need of transcribing live recordings makes this a complex task. In turn, transcribing these texts could yield useful data for translator training, as identifying linguistic resources used to translate discourse markers commonly found in English conversation and fictional dialogues may help translation trainees recognize their multifunctionality and explore a broad range of translation solutions to deal with oral discourse.

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In addition, the translation of other orality markers could be studied to discover if the trends observed are replicated or whether new trends emerge. Further comparisons with spoken discourse would also shed light on whether fictional dialogues—translated or non-translated—resemble spontaneous dialogues. Another interesting path would be to compare similarities and divergences in the translation of discourse markers in theatre translation and dubbing, given the shared mode of discourse of prefabricated orality.

Acknowledgements

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